

Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode



'TWO SCRUBBY TRAVELLERS'
A PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEW OF FLOURISHING
AND CONSTRAINT IN RELIGION THROUGH THE LIVES
OF JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY

Pauline Watson



'Two Scrubby Travellers': a psychoanalytic view of flourishing and constraint in religion through the lives of John and Charles Wesley

By Pauline Watson. Routledge. 2018.
£83.48 (hb). 200 pp.
ISBN 9781138241046

West of England villages are typically split between an Anglican Church, patronised by landowners and farmers, and a Methodist Chapel, home to the labouring poor and the dispossessed. The origin of this divide goes back to two gifted brothers, John and Charles Wesley, whose lives spanned the 18th Century. At Oxford University they were members of the 'holy club' ruled by asceticism and fasting. They were dubbed by their otiose fellow students as 'Methodicals' because of their regular habits of early rising and preaching to the poor. The dissenting spirit of this Christian socialist influence lives on through evangelicalism – John would preach in the open-air to thousands of followers; through Charles' well-known poems and hymns (*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*; *Loves Divine All Loves Excelling*); by welcoming women clergy; and through the emphasis on faith and hope as the foundation of a Christian life, as opposed to election or adherence to doctrine.

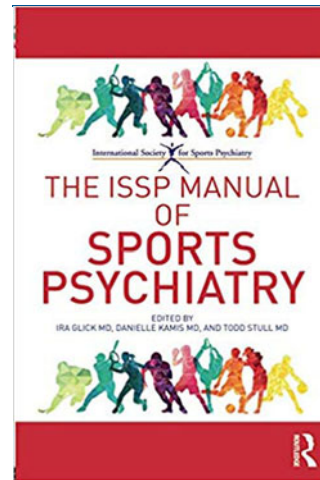
Pauline Watson deploys her medical psychotherapist and Methodist experience to psychoanalysing the two brothers' lives based on the ideas of Bulgarian–French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. Kristeva contrasts *semiotic* with merely *symbolic* representations, the former embodying meaning, without which verbal symbolism remains abstract and devoid of feeling. Watson argues that John, for all his public talents and compassion, was somewhat emotionally dead or 'constrained', as attested by his failure to form satisfactory relationships with women – ever oscillating between intrusiveness and withdrawal. She links this with 18th century infant mortality: his mother Susannah had just lost four children and was in a state of mourning prior to his birth. Younger brother Charles, while inheriting his father's manic-depressive tendencies, had a more loving childhood, formed an enduring and happy marriage and was able to 'flourish' by bringing the semiotic and the symbolic together, transmuting painful ('sinful') emotional experience into words and music.

Watson deploys two further key Kristevian concepts: that of the 'abject' and the 'good father'. In order to transcend 'abject relations' the child must survive the absence, abandonment, emptiness and deathliness which separation from the care-giver entails. This is achieved with the help of a loving and forgiving (as opposed to Freud's punitive super-ego) 'good father'. Watson claims that John, unlike Charles, never fully attained these in an earthly sense, and so had to repress his inner void and project them into the religious dimensions of sin and God-the-fatherly love.

The book has much to recommend it: by choosing psychobiography it avoids the problem of patient confidentiality; its well-written; and it has an attractive cross-disciplinary flair. As an editor *manqué* I would want a snappier title; an affordable paperback edition; to eliminate the occasional lapse into thesis-speak; and to launch a series on psychoanalysis and religion of which this could be lead volume.

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The ISSP Manual of Sports Psychiatry

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ISBN 9780415792509

The *International Society for Sports Psychiatrists (ISSP) Manual for Sports Psychiatry* is timely because it provides a 'pocket text' for sports psychiatrists working within an emerging and niche field. It develops new themes initially described in recent years by *Clinical Sports Psychiatry – An International Perspective* by Baron *et al*¹ and *Sports Psychiatry* by Currie and Owen.²

This Manual is organised into non-contact and contact sports. The authors have further subdivided into individual sports. This is a useful framework for the stated aims of the Manual, which allows authors to focus on individual issues relevant to each of the sports covered. Each chapter is written by a specialist within each field. Dr David MacDuff, a leading American expert, contributes significantly to four chapters in the second half of the book.

Most chapters begin with a history from within the specific sport. Each describes unique psychological aspects as well as challenges of diagnosis, epidemiology and treatment. One example of this is in the rowing chapter where 'benign masochism' is considered and expanded upon. The authors define this as being 'an enjoyment of negative bodily reactions safely and pleasurably in the context of mind over body.' This would be an essential psychological concept for a psychiatrist to broach during any assessment prior to diagnosis and formulation.

The chapter on boxing is a particular highlight of the Manual and I found it to be most informative. It touches upon the hot topics in sports medicine and sports psychiatry: concussion/chronic traumatic encephalopathy, depression and substance abuse. Dr Ronald Kamm balances scientific information, psychological themes and diagnosis/treatment options succinctly. He provides useful insight into 'end of career transition' and how this can be a difficult phase for boxers from a mental health point of view. This can be generalised to other sporting realms. This is the only chapter to discuss and differentiate the interface between amateur and professional sports participation.

Along with interesting insights into rowing and boxing, less mainstream sports are well served within the Manual; for example squash and weightlifting would not necessarily be sports that would immediately attract attention or one would expect to be included. The chapters give information on the likely prevalence of disease and treatment options. The unique ethical challenges within weightlifting are also considered.

Areas for advancement in further publications could include expansion of the cricket chapter. One of the first of the high-profile 'disclosures' in the UK national media was a well-known English opening batsman. This led to an increase in interest in mental health issues within cricketing circles. There was a realisation that the format of the County cricket circuit within England, as well as the travel associated and being away from home with a national team, may not be the easiest to navigate from a mental health perspective. The cricketing authorities have been proactive in addressing this and there are now mental health professionals working within cricket.

A chapter on rugby including union, league or sevens would be welcome. Rugby, among differing codes, is well established and popular in Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, UK and Ireland, France and South Africa. It is rapidly growing in North America and Asia, with this year's World Cup due to be staged in Japan. Rugby has a culture of 'being tough' with macho, masculine traits encouraged. There also persists a drinking culture within rugby, particularly within the amateur game. Therefore, given the popularity of rugby worldwide and some of its maladaptive psychological characteristics, it deserves a separate commentary.

Historical backgrounds to each sport is a theme running throughout the book. Although interesting, I felt this has minimal relevance in the majority of sports featured. Omission of information may lead to more space for the discussion of clinical issues. Case studies are used in these types of texts in other areas of medicine and should be considered for further publications.

Overall I would recommend this manual to psychiatrists interested in the field of sport psychiatry, sports psychologists and sports medics. Managerial staff and coaches should also be attracted and the text would likely develop their understanding. The Manual is conveniently set out, easy to read and meets most of its stated aims. The general topic will expand in the near future. This text contributes to the expertise of doctors treating the brain as any other muscle in a sporting environment.

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- 2 Currie A, Owen B (eds). *Sports Psychiatry*. Oxford University Press, 2016.